

1922 - YOUR YEAR IN REVIEW

1922 PRICES

AVERAGE INCOME	\$	2,067.00
NEW CAR	\$	390.00
NEW HOUSE	\$	7,197.00
LOAF OF BREAD	\$.09
GALLON OF GAS	\$.11
GALLON OF MILK	\$.52
GOLD PER OUNCE	\$	20.67
SILVER PER OUNCE	\$	1.09
DOW JONES AVERAGE		93

President - **WARREN HARDING**
Vice President - **CALVIN COOLIDGE**

INVENTIONS - CAR RADIO INSULIN
ICE CREAM BARS HELICOPTER
LEAD ETHYL GASOLINE
PUSH BUTTON ELEVATOR

Life Expectancy - 54.1 YEARS

MISS AMERICA - MARY CAMPBELL, COLUMBUS, OH

Calendar for Events from your year 1922



JANUARY 1922

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
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FEBRUARY 1922

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MARCH 1922

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APRIL 1922

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MAY 1922

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JUNE 1922

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AUGUST 1922

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SEPTEMBER 1922

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OCTOBER 1922

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NOVEMBER 1922

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DECEMBER 1922

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Dedication

by
Twins, Katie Merle and Mary Pearl Craig



This book of Memories is dedicated to
God, our Parents, Families, and Friends.

First, to God who is Love. We thank
Him for creating us and placing us in the
arms of a Loving and devoted Papa and Mama.

Second, we thank Love Ones who make up
our families and have Loved us all of our lives.

Third, thanks to many, many Friends who
have inspired and encouraged us with their
Love throughout our life-long journey

Twin Babies

Two-year old Otis Porter pleaded, “Mama, I want to go to Craigs to see babies two of them.” His mother, Mrs. Hallie Porter, and Mrs. Matt Beavers, family neighbors, delivered us on a snowy night January 26, 1922. Dr. Harry Lee from Ludlow, 8 miles away, rode a horse to help with the delivery, but he arrived too late. What a surprise for not even Mama knew she was having twins.



When Mrs. Beavers was bathing Merle, Mama said, “You had better hurry up for I have another one for you to bathe.” Mary appeared weighing only 3 pounds; Merle tipped the scales at almost 6 pounds. By age two, there appeared very little difference in looks or actions. Merle led the way in sitting up, crawling, and walking, but Mary blazed the way in talking. From pictures taken, it was impossible to tell them apart except when Mary had a doll in her hands. She always loved dolls.



Family

Our parents, George Pickney (Pink) and Slonia Kitchings Craig grew up 5 miles apart in Scott County. They married when Papa was 18 and Mama was 15 in 1999. They were blessed with 13 children: Walter, Nannie, Ruby, Tressie Mae, Leola, Estelle, John Lester, Pauline, Eddie, Clifton, Merle, Mary, and Gary. (Three of the children, Estelle, John Lester, and Pauline died as infants and Tressie Mae died at age 24.) All the children were born and reared in Mississippi within a 10-mile radius of Forkville and Ludlow communities.

Our five older siblings—Walter, and 4 sisters—Nannie, Ruby, Tressie Mae, and Leola grew up together. After 3 babies died, then came Eddie, Clifton, Merle, Mary, and Gary. Even though our parents had a house full of children, the older ones were grown and gone before we came along. They called us the “fall crop.” When we were born Mama said she didn’t know why God gave her 2 babies. Before long, her health failed and she knew why God gave her twins—for one girl could not have done all that was required.

Since our parents’ marriage about 110 years ago, over 200 descendants have been recorded who are living in 14 states. How proud Papa and Mama would be to know of the contribution their descendants have made to the Craig family. Of the 9 surviving children, 7 lived to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversaries. Two sons lost their wives in death after 40-plus years of marriage. Highlights are written by their family members and published in 100-Year Span of the Kitchings Clan.



Seated first row (left): Slonia Craig, Nannie Price, and Walter Craig
Standing second row (left): Mary Denson, Leola Wallace, Merle Latham, and Ruby Merchant
Standing third row (left): Eddie Craig, Clifton Craig, Gary Craig

The Ponder Place

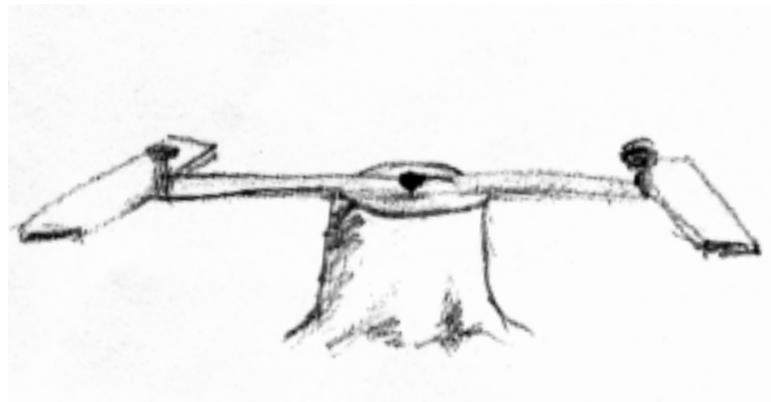
(The D. S. Shoemaker Road about 3 miles from Forkville, MS)



Nannie and Thomas Price were courting and Thomas had a four-year-old girl to raise after the death of his wife. Since Merle thought Nannie was her mother they had two kids to take everywhere they went. Nannie and Thomas and Leola and Joe Wallace married the same year. When Merle saw Leola gathering her clothes and things to go with Joe, she said, “Leola has got me started and I am going to get married too.”

One afternoon Merle, Clifton, and Eddie went to the barn to gather eggs. When Mary missed them she climbed up on a wooden picket fence, which was sharp pointed at the top. Her foot slipped and she fell catching only by her bottom lip. With no way to get her to a doctor for stitches, she carries that scar today.

Eddie and Clifton made us a Flying Jenny by cutting down a tree and using the stump to put a plank on. A hole was bored in the center of the plank and a large iron pin put in the hole and driven deep into the stump so it would go round and round when being pushed. It provided many hours of fun for us as well as the neighboring children.



The Sye Chambers Place

(Located on Hwy 13 two miles North of Forkville)

This house was much warmer than we had lived in before. There were many good and some sad memories of our childhood while living there. For instance: We experienced playing in an 11-inch snow and eating snow ice cream. Walter came home and met Gary for the first time. Many of the neighbors remained good friends all of our lives. School days began for us at Forkville School. Tressie Mae died and Mama began having health problems with rheumatoid arthritis.

We enjoyed playing “Grown-ups” and would nail spools on the bottom of our worn out tennis shoes. When playing “house,” our dolls were our babies. Our playhouse was located in the yard next to the smokehouse. One year Santa Claus brought Mary a ring and Merle did not get one. Mama said, “Look on the floor behind the bed, I thought I heard something in the night and the cat might have gotten your ring.” Merle found her ring.

Mama had put her bedding out on the porch to sun but it served another purpose. She raised tobacco to put in her hens’ nest to ward off mites. We, with brothers Clifton and Gary decided to make a cigar and smoke it like our neighbor did. Shortly thereafter we four kids were vomiting and very sick. All four fell on the bedding as white as a sheet and Mama just laughed and said, “Maybe you all have learned your lesson and will let tobacco alone.”

One afternoon Mama took us with her to visit Cousin Fannie Chambers. We took our small rubber ball to play with while there. The house had a dog-trot-hall with no ceiling at the top. Wouldn’t you know that rubber ball bounced high enough to go down between the planks on the side of the wall and it was gone! We begged Cousin Sye to tear the planks off so we could retrieve our ball. It has been eighty years and as far as we know the ball is there for the house is still standing.

Scott County Fair

One of our most fond memories as small children was going to the Scott County Fair at Forkville. Brother and Sister Davis came and preached in a pavilion each year. We do not know if they were Baptist or not, but we do know our parents enjoyed their messages.

Mama entered many articles in the exhibits every year. She had canned goods—string beans, chili sauce, cucumber pickles, corn, and peas to be judged and given award ribbons of blue, red, and white. She also entered some of her favorite pot plants for judging. Papa entered some of his cotton baskets and chair bottoms he had woven with split cane.



The Fair provided plenty entertainment.



Bother & Sister Davis



This picture was made when we were three years old.

Ava Davis, daughter of Brother and Sister Davis, became our friend and escort while attending the Scott County Fair. She helped us ride the merry-go-round, and provided us with plenty to eat such as: ice cream, peaches, cookies, candied apples, and everything we wanted. In fact, we really liked her for she was so good to us. When we became tired and sleepy, she spread a quilt pallet on the sawdust between wooden benches.

Throughout our life we have heard people say, “You two black headed little girls were the cutest thing we ever saw and we still wonder how your parents could tell you apart for you were truly identical.” After there were no more Scott County fairs we would go over the grounds kicking up sawdust searching for money, and lots of coins were found.

School Days: Forkville

Grades 1-3



Forkville School laid the foundation for our many years of schooling to follow. Under the guidance of our first teacher, Miss Mary Lyle (Harmon), we learned respect, good morals, and that we were there to work, not play. She proved to be our motivation and inspiration. For more than 65 years we did not know where to find our first teacher. One day in 1999 while visiting friends in the Nursing Home in Morton, Mississippi, we found her there as a resident. How happy we were to see her. She has since passed away.



Forkville School 1928. We are seated on the first row. (See next page for the names of students.)

Forkville School 1928

First Row: Mildred Harvey, Lodean Williams, Gwendolen Sims, Maggie Duncan, Jack Thompson, Hattie Pruitt, Irma Lee Armstrong, Amos Harvey, Sadie Gould, Mary & Merle Craig, Marie Champion, Robert Shoemaker, Clara Mae Gould, Grover Patrick, Bobby Fairchilds, Inez Traxler, Josephine Harvey, James Ward.

Second Row: Theo Porter, Hubert Stone, George Harrell, Clifton Craig, Porter Wilkerson, Ted Nutt, Mary Baker, Bessie Mae Armstrong, Marvin Harvey, Thurman Price, Leland Harvey, Ernest Thompson, Roy Stone, D. S. Shoemaker, Trudie Bell Pruitt, Earline Price, unknown

Third Row: John Pruitt, Johnny Patrick, A. G. Gould, Wilkerson, Katie Bell Walker, Genell Patrick, Miss Atkins, Miss McDill, Irma Lee Beavers, Jean Patrick, Miss Wescott, Mr. Watkins, Ola Mae Champion, Annie Maude Armstrong, Theodria Sims, Cecil Champion, Majella Stone, Annie Bell Wallace, Zenobra Craig, Louise Porter, Knox Beavers, Johnsey Ryals

Fourth Row: Purvis Williams, Thurmon Patrick, Ira Baker, Bilbo Armstrong, Byran Waggoner, Audry Golden, Mary Shoemaker, Irma Lee Ward, Jake Banks, Chester Gould, Tip Nutt, Mertle Thray Harrell, Christine Walker, Alleen Harrell

Fifth Row: Pauline Stone, Curtis Duncan, Sallie B. Ponder, Grady Fairchilds, Dent Porter, Eddie Craig, Burt Walker, Autence Wallace, Snooks Wallace, Fletcher Wilkerson, Leo Harrell, Fotch Duncan, Baskin Kitchings, Dot Rushing, Adelia Wilkinson, Ruth Stone.

Sixth Row: Louise Walker, Hattie Mae Fairchilds, Clotile Irby, Ruby Doris Baker, Mattie Bell Nutt, Edwin Wilkinson, Ellis Wallace, Arlo McDaniel, Melvin Harrell, Myrtle Pruitt, Lillie Bell Sims, Annie Mae Shoemaker, Fay Edwards, Howard Walker, Christine Beavers, L.E.Nutt, Maggie Williams, Esther Wilkerson

Seventh Row: Nell Beavers, Pauline Wallace, Ruby Pearl Hicks, Lillie Mae Wallace, Janice Ryals, Levie Williams, Wydell Kitchings, Estelle Burns, Loye Patrick, L. B. Porter, Wallace Ryals, Reginald Golden

Eighth Row: T. O. Irby, Bob Banks, Raymond Duncan, Wylie Moore, Jr., Clint Fairchilds, Irvin Wallace, Byron Beavers, Robert Champion, Eddie Wallace, Jack Edwards, Amos Ponder, Ernest Waggoner, Paul Champion

Elementary School Grades 1-3

Forkville

Schools days for us began at age six. We were two peas in a pod who had been nurtured at home with no preschool training. The most unforgettable event that first year of school was a movie on the stage in the auditorium.

Our first grade class members were seated on the front row of seats. The only thing we remember about the movie was a train came barreling around a bend of tracks headed straight toward us.

All at once the whistle blew and the train noise increased and that front row of seats were emptied promptly! We were scared half to death for we had never seen a movie, train, or anything like that before. The teachers stopped the movie and corralled us back to our seats with an assurance that the train was not going to run over us. Yes, we will always remember our first movie.



Cousin Jim Golden drove the school wagon to our neighborhood school at Forkville. Seven teachers taught first through twelfth grades with approximately 100 students. The school building, a two-story wood-frame, stood across the road from the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Forkville. The community was so named because the main road from Morton—7 miles north—came to a fork with one road leading to Lena and the other to Ludlow. At the fork were three stores, a post office, and a cotton gin. The School had no electricity and no

Coleman lanterns. The lights were the old-fashioned coal-oil lamps with the little felt wick that had to be trimmed quite often.

Christmas time remains in our memory because of the school's celebration. The big cedar tree would be hauled in from the woods and placed on the stage in the auditorium. Almost every child had some small part in the play and some man would bring the big surprise by acting as Santa Claus. The Christmas tree was decorated with chains we made of colorful paper links, each cut and pasted by hand, and strings of popcorn, and sweet gum balls covered in foil gum wrappers. Each child received a present and sack of candy. The candy was homemade, and there might be a few home-roasted peanuts in the sack. These were experiences that made school days exciting and unforgettable.



In first grade, the classroom consisted of long tables surrounded by small straight chairs. Gene Patrick always had to sit by Mary and Clifton Alford insisted on sitting by Merle. On the playground Clifton would say, "Willie wants Merle, but she's my girl." Keith Ponder and Hubert Stone were two boys the others steered clear of because they were so rough and could beat them up if they so desired.

Our second and third grade teachers were Miss Cleo Moore (Myers) and Miss Huell Donald (Baker). All the teachers were young and later married local young men in the community. Clifton was two grades ahead of us and his teacher was Miss Wescott.

In the second and third grades, the rooms contained desks as shown in the picture. They had a narrow groove at the top so pencils would not roll off. Desks also had a little hole in the upper right-hand corner that held a small inkwell. Beneath the desk top was a compartment to store books. We had to clean that compartment every Friday afternoon. The room was heated with pot-bellied stove fueled with wood. How those boys enjoyed putting their rubber sole shoes on the side of the hot stove to stir up a sink!

Ludlow School Days

Beginning in the 4th grade, we had moved to the Ludlow School District. Forkville teachers had prepared us well. They taught us good study habits, respect, and they inspired us to want to learn. The memories of our first school are happy ones.

Naturally, we wondered how things would be different at Ludlow. The small town was only a fraction larger than Forkville. The school building was a large (in that day) one-story brick building with an auditorium surrounded by classrooms for each grade. The playground looked the same as Forkville—very little equipment.

As for our teacher, she was Miss Ludie Johnson from Laurel, Mississippi. She later married a local young man named Afred Trest. She called us Mary Merle for she stayed confused as to which name belonged to each twin. She was kind, sweet, and helped us make the transition with no trouble.

Ludlow School Facilities

Our schoolhouse was the meeting place for all the social events of the neighborhood. Included were school programs, church socials, Christmas programs, holiday specials, political rallies, and literary meetings. Those days hold special place in our hearts. These pictures of the school and gym are precious in our memories since they are our visual link to our happy school days.

Today not even a brick remains on the “holy ground” we adored in growing up, but the spirit of Ludlow remains with many of us who hold a Ludlow School Reunion each year since 1983. Ludlow Baptist Church permits us to meet in their fellowship hall each year. Each reunion includes anyone affiliated with Ludlow School at any time and they are invited and encouraged to attend. The first reunion registered over 350 attendees. The last few years, because of deaths, approximately 100 signed the register.

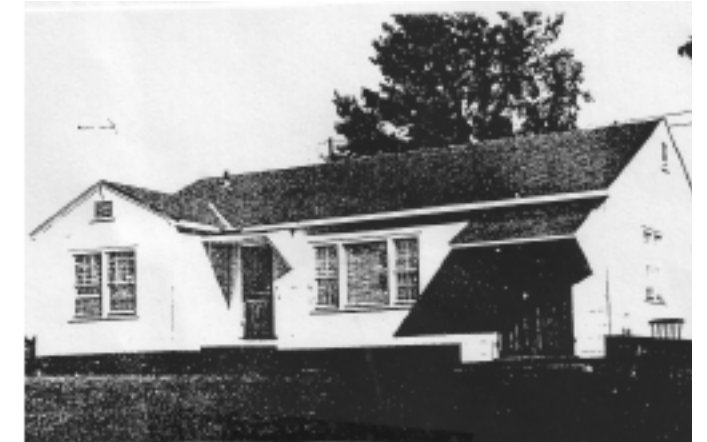
There is a trend now toward teaching children at home. Maybe what they are actually saying is, “Give us back the little schools so we can have the children closer to us.” With the situation of discipline and other disturbing factors, schools are not what they used to be. Thank God for dedicated and devoted teachers today!

When we look back to that little community school of approximately 200 students from grades 1 to 12, we think of the part that it, along with thousands like it, played in the progression of this country. There would have been no education for many people if there had not been those little schools. In the name of progress most have been destroyed and the children bused to a larger school in town.

Ludlow School Surroundings



Ludlow gym built in 1940



Teacher's home



School library



Business department



Lunchroom



Playground

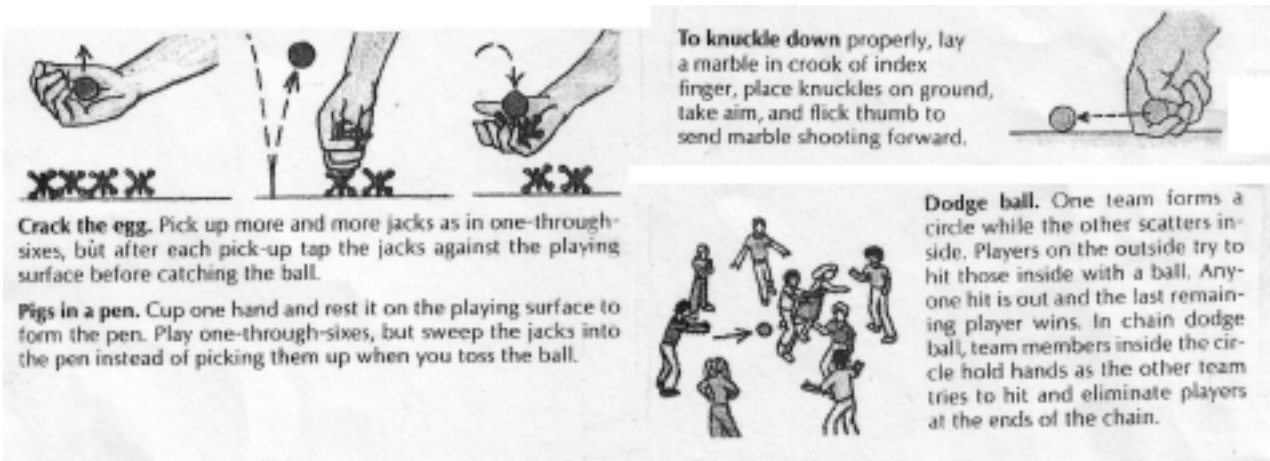
School Activities in Our Day

A dug well provided drinking water. We had a bucket and dipper that was used by all students. For lunch, brought from home in a molasses bucket, was usually a biscuit or potato and whatever was available for Mama to prepare for us.

As with all small schools in our day, the playground had little or no equipment. Our school had three swings and a dirt basketball court. What did we do? We engaged in Crack the Whip, HopScotch, Jump the Rope, Marbles, and Jacks. The teachers provided sit-down games when the weather was too cold or wet to go outside.

Our school day included a ten-minute recess both morning and afternoon with thirty-minutes for lunch. That was our recreation time plus going to the outhouses about 100 feet behind the school building. There were two—one for the girls and the other for the boys. We can't say for the boys' toilet, but ours had only three holes in graduated sizes. Lime was used to sterilize the situation, but it did not prevent a terrible odor.

The lunchtime and afternoon recess were shortened during fall harvest season to allow time to gather crops. Springtime was our favorite season for we enjoyed picking daisies and buttercups for our teachers. Fall season was the least favorite because our playtime was shortened and we had to go home and pick cotton, pick off peanuts, or dig sweet potatoes.



Ludlow, Our *little Town*, Holds *big* Memories

The two-story building was J.C.Lee & Son General Merchandise store on first floor with rental apartments on second floor. Many teachers lived there. Attached to the store were other businesses including a barbershop. On the opposite side of the main street were: Post Office, Service Station, Drug Store, and rental apartments. East of the main street was a ball field where baseball was played every Saturday when weather permitted. A vacant lot provided a place for outdoor movies each weekend. In fact, Ludlow was the place to be on Saturdays. It was the neighborhood-gathering place for old and young alike.

The church, school, and town hold many dreams and memories. All social events, programs, holiday specials, patriotic rallies, and literary meetings, kept the town alive and the residents involved.



This picture is a small portion of the Ludlow we knew when growing up.

Fifth Grade Was a Blessing in Disguise

Our fifth grade teacher, Miss Mildred Speed, married a local business man, Mr. Paul Lee. She continued to inspire us to work hard and plan to attend college. We remember the Scott County Superintendent of Education, Mr. Horace Anderson, coming to our classroom and had us call out numbers as he wrote them on the black-board in a vertical row. He would add the numbers and give us the answer so quickly we felt he had magical powers. He taught us how to add HIS way and let us practice many times. That math lesson proved a tremendous help throughout life.

On Fridays meant spelling matches. We called them Spelling Bees. Since we were considered the two best spellers, we were never allowed on the same side; therefore, we had the privilege of choosing our team members. We were usually the last two standing since all our teammates had misspelled a word and had to sit down. It was tit for tat with us as to who would win each time.

That winter, a very cold one, we stayed sick much of the time. Also, money ran short for the County to pay the school bus drivers. As a result, our bus driver stopped driving our route and we lived too far to walk to school. There was no way to complete the 5th grade. A blessing in disguise, for the second year Mrs. Neva Lee became our teacher. She, a strict disciplinarian, believed in teaching the basic four R's of readin', 'ritin', 'rithmetic and responsibility. When we left her room, we were well prepared for the sixth grade. She was a beautiful lady with snow-white hands and hair who loved and encouraged her students.

The Joy of Having Loving Parents

Mama's daddy died when she was 9. Papa's mother died when he was 8. We know they had a hard time, but they never told us about it. Their formal education was limited to the fourth grade. However, they studied and helped each of us with our schoolwork as long as they could. Mama was good at spelling and Papa was a whiz at math.

Although Papa could work math, he was a poor money manager. Three times he went into business ventures, but each time returned to farming. Mama said he was too good for his own good. He knew how to use his razor strap for things other than sharpening his razor.

Mama was compassionate, peace loving, and tender hearted. Giving was living for her. Although we were poor as "Job's Turkey," we never knew it for Mama found ways of helping someone who was less fortunate than we. She was a master economist, able to do the most with the least.

Mama was happiest when she had her family together. She lived what she taught. Primarily, "Trust in the Lord and your prayers will be answered. But don't pray for anything you don't want for you might get it." One of her favorite sayings was "If people are coming to see my house, I don't care if it is messed up. But, if they are coming to see me, I want it to be cleaned up." Although Mama was crippled with rheumatoid arthritis for forty-two years, she was cheerful and wanted to go and be involved in everything. How she loved family reunions! She died in Hinds General Hospital on July 19, 1967, with congestive heart failure. She also was buried in Forkville Cemetery.



Our Parents Exemplified Work and Discipline

Papa would say, “Get up, it’s almost daylight. You have a lot to do before going to school.” For us it meant cooking breakfast, washing dishes, making up beds, sweeping floors, and getting dressed for school. Eddie, Clifton, and Gary milked cows and fed all the animals. After school chores were plowing, planting, mending fences, splitting wood, gathering eggs and vegetables, feeding hogs and horses, and assorted other seasonal or year-around tasks. In the fall of the year there were cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, and peanuts to be harvested. Our parents believed in “early to bed and early to rise.”

Papa and Mama enjoyed rocking and spoiling their grandchildren. However, we and the grandchildren were introduced to the keen switch and the razor strap rather early in life. If Mama felt we needed to be disciplined and she was unable to handle the situation, she would make us go get our own switches and whip each other. By the time we returned the arguing was over and/or the problem had been solved.



Papa built our first school bus body

A Letter to Mama

Dear Mama

You moved to your final home July 19, 1967. You are with the Father, and we praise Him. When we last visited you in the Hinds General Hospital and the nurse told us your life would soon be leaving your frail and diseased body, we were sad with grief, loneliness, and regret. We will miss you so much since you lived with us 18 years after Papa died.

Yes, we will miss helping you bathe, combing your hair, and listening to your stories about “The Good Old Days.” You set an example of positive attitude, morals, and the value of honest, hard work.

As you lay in the hospital the last days in pain, we hurt for you and would have exchanged places with you if it were possible. Total frustration filled our being because we could do absolutely nothing for you.

Many times since you were called Home, we have said, “Lord, why do we seem to be grieving for Mama now when she is still alive?” He allowed us to suffer with you so that He could comfort us. He allowed us to cry so that He could dry our tears while we could still see and touch you.

He allowed us to go to Him pleading for strength for another day, and to increase our faith and dependence on Him. Finally, we said, “Lord, we have cried all the tears, prayed all the prayers, and we don’t know what else to do. He seemed to say, “Hold on my children, joy comes in the morning, trust me.”

Mama, you took priority in our lives and our lives revolved around caring for you. Praise the Lord for husbands who may not have understood but remained by our side with love and support. They also Loved you dearly.

We have had many dreams about you. Always you are happy, healthy, and whole. We have awakened many mornings wondering what kind of day you were having. Someday we will join you in your new home. You can show us around your mansion, and maybe we can have ice cream again as we visit with you and Jesus.



Mama with one of her great grands.

Mama Said, “We’ll Make Do”

It wasn’t easy to make a living in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. But memories of our childhood bring to mind Mama’s words: “We’ll make do.” That was the key to our survival.

Mama was a tall woman (5 feet 7 inches). She wore her thin hair pulled up on the top of her head in a bun. Most of the time she dressed in heavy shoes with cotton stockings, a long dress and an appropriate apron.

She paid for sugar, flour, salt, soda and things we couldn’t grow on the farm with eggs she gathered from the chickens in the yard. She milked cows, churned butter, worked in the fields, hoed corn, cotton and made a garden. She canned the vegetables we ate. This she did before rheumatism took over her body.

We remember the delicious cobblers she made from wild blackberries. She baked molasses cookies, egg custard pies, and cakes put together with homemade jelly. She cut old felt hats into strips and sewed them to the wick on the kerosene lamps so that all the wick could be used. When there was no visible way, she found a way.

Mama did not complain about her health or hardship; she simply found a way to make the most of what she had. She was wise; her ingenuity was phenomenal.

Mama was an old-fashioned grandma. She didn’t have money, but she had plenty of love to share with her children and grandchildren. The love she gave us has remained in our hearts, and we have shared it with others. It has helped us through many dark days when we needed it most. Mama didn’t have a magic formula for living. She simply had a way of turning hardship into something worthwhile.

Papa’s Store

Our Papa owned a small store five miles south of Ludlow and five miles north of Forkville. Today it is known as New Home Community. We were in grade school and our memory is vague on some things he sold, but about others it is vivid. Farmers came to the store with their eggs and chickens and sold them in exchange for necessities.

There were three kinds of sugar for sale, each in its own barrel—granulated, brown and soft white. Each barrel had its own scoop and Papa weighed what the customer wanted. One day a neighbor boy came into the store and walked over to the white sugar barrel and said, “Mr. Pink, I could eat that whole barrel of sugar.” Papa scooped up a cup of sugar and handed it to him and said, “Son, here’s your chance, go ahead.” After a few minutes, the boy said, “Mr. Pink there is something wrong with this sugar it doesn’t taste good.” Of course Papa knew why it didn’t taste good anymore—because he had eaten too much. Papa never had to challenge him again.

Coffee was sold in the bean, which had to be roasted before grinding. What a delightful smell when those coffee beans were roasting to a golden brown. As we started breakfast by building a fire in the wood burning stove, one of us would grind the coffee. This was then measured into a large enamel coffeepot with the right amount of water, generally a pot full, and allowed to come to a boil. Then it was pushed to the back of the stove where there was less heat and the grounds were allowed to settle. Believe it or not, it was good.

Cheese came in a big round wooden box and was cut with a large knife. As far as we remember, it was the only kind of cheese Papa had. The large variety of cheeses in today’s stores was unheard of then.

We don’t remember selling a pack of cigarettes. It was a “roll-your-own” era and a pack of papers was given with each bag of tobacco. If a woman had been seen smoking a cigarette, the shock waves would have reached all over the country. Yes, there were also bags of chewing tobacco, snuff, Prince Albert, and Red Man.

His store also had barrels of pinto beans, pickles, and all kinds of penny candy. It had an old-fashioned cash register and many things hanging on the wall. We thought that store must be kind of like heaven. The smells made our little tummies turn over because we were so hungry. Papa usually gave us some baloney, cheese, and crackers, and oh, what a feast that was!

Papa sold “coal oil” by the gallon for lighting lamps and starting fires. We can’t remember calling it kerosene. Vinegar came in barrels, too.

Although Papa could work math, he was a poor money manager. Three times he went into business ventures, but each time returned to farming. Mama said he was too good for his own good.

Mama and Papa Said So and We Believed Them

We country girls knew we were not rich, but we did not think we were poor either. Not only did we learn to work like our parents, we learned to talk like them too. Some of their sayings were called advice, predictions, beliefs, proverbs, or one-sentence sermons. As we have grown older, they have remained in our memory. Some of the sayings are listed below with their intended meaning:



- If the good Lord’s willing and the creeks don’t rise. (Only if it is God’s will.)
- What’s good for the goose is good for the gander. (This information applies to you also.)
- The fiddler calls the tune. (Who do you think is boss around here?)
- Idle hands are the devil’s workshop. (Everyone around here stays busy—no lazy bones.)
- The person who never makes a mistake is one who never does anything. (We all make mistakes.)
- You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. (Be nice and sweet all the time.)
- Actions speak louder than words. (Don’t just tell me what you will do—do it!)
- Doing right is never wrong.” (Two wrongs never make a right.)
- Don’t burn your bridges behind you. (Don’t say or do anything that will hurt you in the future.)
- The problems of this life are meant to make us better, not bitter. (Another of their wise sayings.)
- Honesty is the best policy. (Don’t tell us a lie or you are in deep trouble.)
- Beauty is only skin deep. (The way you act is more important than the way you look.)
- Too many cooks spoil the broth. (Get out of the kitchen for I can do the cooking myself.)
- Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched. (Have the goods in hand before you brag.)
- Promises and piecrusts were both made to be broken. (Be scarce with promises.)
- A stitch in time saves nine. (Used as a cautious prevention.)
- Busy people don’t have time to be busybodies. (Tend to your own business.)
- In smithereens (Anything broken to pieces.)
- A lick and a promise” (If Mama had no time to do a thorough job)

Mama’s Preventative Medicine

In spite of various precautions, we kids fell heir to contagious diseases such as measles and chicken pox. Mama knew the chances excellent that we would all take the disease from the first victim, and she felt the sooner the whole matter was over the better for all concerned. How did she handle that situation? She made us sleep together, eat together, even drink from the same glass, leaving nothing to chance. No isolation was permitted.

There were benefits even while being sick—misery loves company. We were never lonely, and could play together as long as we could hold up our heads. If one of us got sick and the doctor came, Mama said, “Leave enough medicine for the other twin for she will be sick before the day is over.” How true that proved to be.

Mama was a firm believer in preventive medicine. Every spring, each of us was dosed with generous helping of sulfur and molasses. Our current state of health had nothing to do with the matter. This was merely to get that sluggish inter blood on the run and off to a good start. (*We wonder now* if that is why we are both allergic to sulfur.)

Junior High

Mr. Carl Chapman

Mr. Carl Chapman taught our science in junior high school. He came from up North and delighted in taking field trips in the woods. The woods near our school grounds in Ludlow, Mississippi, were full of sweet gum trees. Mr. Chapman had never heard of getting chewing gum from trees. Certainly not gum that could be blown into a bubble. This experience was new to him and a delight for us to teach him about bubble gum. Here is our teaching:

“The resin, or sap, from these sweet gum trees is the necessary ingredient for gum making. Once the sap pops out from the trees, you wait until a large hunk appears and becomes firm. Sticky sap is impossible to chew. To help firm up the sap, you can add stretch berries (also found near the gum trees) to make the gum pliable and to be able to blow bubbles.”

Only one experience with sap that was not firm convinced our teacher that we had taught a valuable lesson. When told he must look out for worms in the sap, he remarked, “Let the worms look out for themselves.” Needless to say, our field trips provided some book facts, supplemented with nature facts.

Being a young single man, he enjoyed social activities. Therefore, he initiated some good marshmallow roasts, peanut boilings, and cane chewing events. No, not during school hours, but soon thereafter. You have heard it said that students will learn in spite of the teacher, and we do believe doing our homework, studying the textbooks, and being inspired by the teacher, we survived future science classes.



Bubble gum in the 1920s was a creation each of us made with distinct pride of ownership. We don't remember seeing it packaged in the stores at all, but it was fun to make. It took a lot of work to make the gum. You probably think we threw it away after an hour or two? No way. We had to have a good hiding place to save our creation from day to day. A small cup that you could put in a secret place was ideal.

You were really living dangerously if you brought your gum to school. Another student might tattle on you. If the teacher saw you chewing it at recess, you were punished, and even worse, the teacher threw the gum away. The best idea was to leave it hidden at home. Then you had your own bubble gum to look forward to after school.

Farm Fashions on Parade

As for fashions in the 40s, bosoms, bobby socks, and saddle oxfords were in style. So were sheath dresses, poodle and blue denim skirts. That meant nothing to us since our dresses were homemade using materials from local merchants and Sears Roebuck Company. As novelties, feed sacks were used for fun. These “Sack” fashions would get more attention than anything considered in Vogue.

Don't tell us Farm Fashions did not include creative outfits made from flour and feed sacks. As soon as the sacks were empty, they were made into up-to-date designer creations.



Mary Mae Merle

Medical Remedies Used by Grandma and Mama

Grandma Laura and Mama depended on their “home-made” remedies for all kinds of illnesses. Some examples were:

Croup was treated with onion poultices placed on the chest and throat while hot. Boils were also treated with warm poultices made of a leaf of cabbage. Sassafras tea was made, especially in the springtime we drank to keep from getting sick. Poke Salute was a wild vegetable that was believed to ward off diseases. Did we eat it? Back then we ate what was put on our plate—and all of it!

A ball of Asafetida on a string was tied around our necks to discourage germs. A good round of calomel was given to us each spring, followed by a big dose of castor oil to clean us out and get prepared for hoeing the garden and fields. Don’t you wonder how we survived?

Croup Remedies: They mixed a teaspoon of castor oil with a little soda. Another remedy was poultices made of onion placed on the chest and throat while hot.

Chest Cold: They mixed two tablespoonfuls of turpentine or tallow and rub it on our chests and necks.

Diarrhea: They gave us a blackberry sedative made with berries, roots and leaves crushed in a cup of boiling water. Let it cool and drink a cup each day until cured.

Hiccough Remedies: They gave us a lump of sugar saturated with vinegar.

Toothache: They split a raisin in half, cover with black pepper, and put on our tooth.

Itch and Hives: They put sulfur and unsalted lard heated and used as an ointment to cure the “itch.”

Insect Sting: They cut an onion, scrape and apply the juicy part to the sting. It gave relief quickly.

Chills and Fever: They boiled dry corn shucks, save water, and drink while still hot.

Papa’s Unreliable Weather Forecasting

Long ago, most people—urban and rural—lived closer to nature than we do today. They depended on animals, insects, plants, and other natural phenomena to predict weather changes. Papa observed that cats and dogs became restless, ducks quacked, hens squawked and clustered in groups, geese honked, donkeys brayed, pigs squealed, and roosters crowed later in the day. Horses were nervous and calves played and frolicked more than usual. He said, “Cows could be called a popular weather forecaster. They bel-lowed more before a shower. The more a cow swings her tail, the more severe an approaching storm will be, perhaps including hail.”

After many years observing hogs, he predicted rain when he saw the pigs scratching their backs on fence posts. The sun, moon, and sky were closely watched for changing weather conditions. Papa referred to the “chicken- scratch clouds ” and predicted the coming of warmer temperature. When he saw “buttermilk sky” clouds this meant rain was coming.

Papa included humans in his weather forecasting. He said people didn’t understand why but most people noticed when old wounds, surgical scares, bunions and arthritic joints hurt more than usual, it was going to storm. People with arthritis are sometimes called “human hygrometers.” Why? Because a hygrometer measures humidity that apparently causes fluid in the joints and tissues to swell, making movement painful. Today, we will agree with Papa 100 percent based on personal experience.

Coming winters forecasted by: an unusual amount of fat on the tripe when beef was butchered; extra-heavy husks on the corn; squirrels hiding their winter store in hollow trees; and bees unusually busy, late in summer.

Papa kept the Farmers’ Almanac, as all farmers did, to refer to weather forecasting and planting time. With no meteorologists to tell us, we relied on Papa who guessed the weather about as well as some of the weather forecasters do today.

Obituary of George Pinkney Craig

George Pickney Craig, 66 died March 21, 1948, in Morton Hospital due to heart trouble. Pink leaves his wife Slonia and 9 children: Walter, Nannie, Ruby, Leola, Eddie, Clifton, Merle, Mary, and Gary (Shown below.)

Mr. Craig was born and reared in Mississippi. Family and friends in Scott, Leake, and Rankin Counties will miss his "helping hands" with vocational skills, advising farmers, and his hospitality.

Known as a Master Carpenter, Mr. Craig built and repaired houses, barns, and chimneys throughout the neighboring counties. His woodworking skills included making small chairs, big rockers, axe and hammer handles, and ball bats.

One of his favorite things was sitting in his rocker on the front porch and visiting with neighbors and friends as they came by. Those porches provided a place for him to dream, worry about the weather, and wonder if he would be able to pay for the home he had bargained for. Most of all he loved rocking his grandchildren and imparting country wisdom to all who would listen.

Mr. Craig's funeral and burial were held in Scott County at Bethlehem Baptist Church at Forkville.



Walter, Clifton, Leola, Nannie, Ruby, Mary, Merle, Mama, Eddie, Gary, and Jack Baker (Grandchild)



George P. Craig

Remembering Grandma Kitchings

While living at the Fairground Place, we were only a hop, skip, and a jump from Grandma's house. What a thrill to visit her. She needed help with her chores as milking the cow, churning, bringing in wood and water, feeding the chickens, and gathering the eggs. She said we were her legs.

Grandma was a sweet, Christian lady who loved everyone. Since Grandpa died at 33, Grandma had a hard life raising seven children by herself. By the time we knew her, she lived alone in one side of the Kitchings home, which Papa built while Uncle Atley's family lived in the other side. We enjoyed being with Grandma and playing with Atley, Jr. and Harold. Our mouths watered as we saw Aunt Marion serving her children shredded wheat and other cereals that we never had at home. Uncle Atley and Aunt Marion treated us well and accepted our country customs.



L. E. Nutt, Eddie Craig, & Wydell Kitchings

We remember Grandma trying to teach us how to milk her cow. But the cow was not too happy with our small hands and pinching her teats, and we were not happy squeezing something that felt like grub worms. Needless to say, we were little help in milking, but we loved churning for her. How butter got into the milk she said it was her magic that did it. We believed her for we knew she could cure the stomachache with a teaspoon of turpentine and sugar, and stop a wasp sting from hurting instantly with a dab of her wet snuff from her lip.

Not often did Grandma invite us to spend the night with her, but if she was not feeling well, she asked us to stay. We loved sleeping with her on her big high poster bed with roping for springs. The bed was so high we had to get on her little black box she kept beside her bed to climb upon the bed. That black box was also a mystery for Grandma would not tell us what was in it. When curiosity would get the best of us, we would ask again about the black box. She would answer, "Girls, that's Granny's business." We thought she was being ugly to us, but later we knew that was where she kept all her business papers. We remember a white ceramic or porcelain owl and a ginger jar on her mantel over the fireplace. In the owl and the jar she kept hard candy. We were not allowed to touch either, but she would usually give us a piece of candy if she thought we deserved it.

Grandma died of colon cancer at the age of 77, January 4, 1939, and was buried at Forkville, Mississippi, in Scott County. We have precious memories of Grandma and thank God she lived long enough for us to know her and to love her dearly.

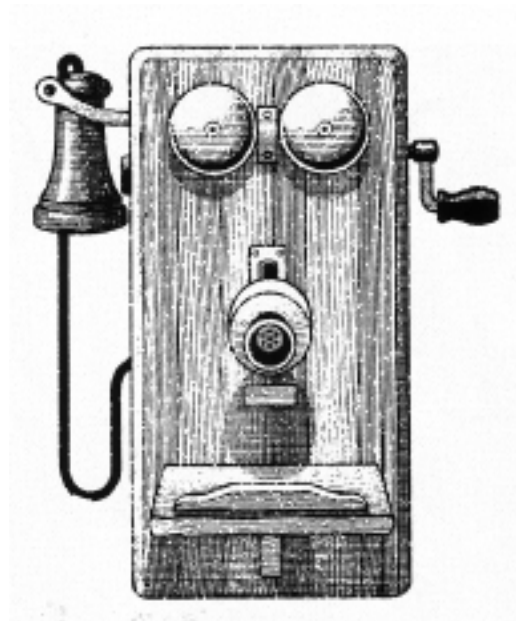


Grandma Laura Kitchings with grandsons Atley, Jr. and Harold Kitchings.

Grandma's Telephone

In Grandma's day, the telephone was her only way of communicating since she had no means of transportation. The telephone was her lifeline. All lines in the country were party lines and each customer had a certain ring—one or two long and some short ones. The hard part of getting a call through was people taking the receivers down to listen in. This weakened the ring. Each telephone on a party line received all rings, but each was supposed to answer only his/her ring. This seldom happened because they answered any ring they wanted to and they wanted to most of time.

A neighbor, named Lucy Ponder, answered all rings. One time Grandma couldn't get her call through, so she said, "Lucy, get off the line." A few days later she saw Lucy and Lucy asked her how she knew she was on the line. Grandma told her that she knew her clock tick. Lucy laughed and said, "I know what I can do about that. I will stop the clock every time the phone rings."



Grandma's Fancy Aprons

Dear Grandma

When we think of you, we remember your attractive and versatile aprons made of fabric in many colorful prints from flour and feed sacks. You used the flour to make biscuits and cakes to eat with your homemade jelly and jam. You made many household items as material for quilts, pillowcases, dresses for us, and aprons for you and Mama. Every apron had a pocket or two to carry the small snuff box and black gum toothbrush used with your habit of snuff dipping.

In the kitchen you needed your apron for protecting your dresses from flying flour and other ingredients as you cooked. You used your apron not only while cooking, but as a hot dish holder when checking the progress of food in the oven.

Those aprons were used for dusting furniture, fanning when hot, protecting your arms when cold, waving to shoo chickens, or gathering eggs from the nest. When consoling us in your lap, you cuddled us and wiped away our tears with your apron.

You depended on those aprons to get you through your busy days. Today, we adore aprons and use them in many of the ways you and Mama did. We wonder if there will ever be a household gadget that will take the place of those magical aprons.

We miss you and look forward to more happy Kitchings reunions in heaven with you and our Loved ones.

Love always



Folklore and Superstitions

In Scott County, Mississippi, where we grew up, superstitions abounded. Many we remember, but few we believed affected our lives. Here are a few we remember that have been passed from generation to generation.

- * A dog howling at night is a sign there will be a death.
- * A dining fork dropped on the floor foretells the arrival of a female visitor, a knife, the coming a male.
- * A cat eating grass foretells rain.
- * Rubbing the scalp frequently with a divided onion cures baldness.
- * To cure a child’s fits, turn his shirt inside out and burn it.
- * Urinating on a public road caused sties.
- * Playing with fire would result in wetting the bed that night.
- * Bad luck to sing before breakfast.
- * “A whistling girl and a crowing hen always come to some bad end.”
- * Finding a pin was good luck if the point was toward you, but bad luck if the head toward you.
- * When fishing, you must spit on the bait to make the fish bite.
- * Breaking a mirror meant 7 years of bad luck.
- * When a broom chanced to fall across a doorway, it meant company was coming.
- * If a left-hand palm itched, you were going to get money.
- * If a right hand palm itched, you were going to meet someone new.
- * If your ears burned, someone was talking about you.
- * White spots on fingernails meant that was the number times you had lied.
- * Raw cucumbers caused chills and fever.
- * If you step on a crack, you will break you Mama’s back.
- * If a black cat crosses your path, you will have bad luck.
- * If a black cat follows you home, you will have good luck.

Walking in High Cotton

“Walking in tall cotton” was an expression our parents used and heard when someone was doing well financially. That expression never applied to our family. Growing and harvesting cotton by hand was hard, painful work in the 1930s and ‘40s. We found ourselves hoeing cotton in the spring or picking it in the fall; we did both. Our cotton sacks were called “tow sacks.” They were large feed sacks with straps sewn to them, which we placed over one shoulder so we could drag it behind us. Bigger sacks were made of ducking.

As children living in the country, we had few ways to earn money for school clothes, so some of us hired out to neighboring farmers to hoe cotton or to gather it in the fall. Some of our relatives and friends were too proud to work in the field for money. Not us, Papa taught us to be willing to work as long as the job was honorable. For 25 cents a day we hoed cotton or corn, and for 50 cents per hundred pounds we picked cotton. A small amount of money went a long way in helping our parents furnish clothing and school supplies.



Could this have been Clifton or Gary in one of our cotton fields?

Clothing Caused Problems

Mama wanted us dressed the same. Of course, that meant two of everything. We had no money for store-bought clothes. Since our older sisters were gone from home, and their dresses were not large enough to make two small dresses for us, Mama resorted to using sacks—flour, chicken feed, and sugar. We loved feed-sack clothes that Mama helped us make when we were in junior high school. Most everyone wore the latest feed-sack fashions.

While growing up we can't remember having many bought sheet or towel at our home back in the 1920's. Feed sacks were used for sheets, pillowcases, dish towels, and baby diapers. Feed sacks provided many a quilt lining for a scrap top pieced by us. Now 60 years later, we are keeping warm under some of those quilts. Thanks, Mama, for paving the way back to yesterday's memories with feed sacks for our quilts.

We received hand-me-downs from Aunt Johnnie Davis and Aunt Belle Austin and if any part of them could be used, they were. If not, they were given to someone down the road who needed them worse than we did. When there was no one to give them to, Mama would show us how to cut scraps for a quilt. Sometimes the scraps would be no larger than a postage stamp. She had an old New Home treadle sewing machine. Mama would have one of us use our hands to move the foot pedal since her ankles were stiff with arthritis. How she managed to maneuver her crippled hands to sew material is beyond question now that we are old enough to remember and also since we are now experiencing some of the same arthritic symptoms.

Mama was not the only one with problems regarding our clothing. Sometimes one of us would want to wear one thing and the other one would want to wear something else on a particular day. Mama had to be judge and jury to settle our disagreement. Also, socks presented many problems by getting lost.

Once a year Mama sold chickens to buy us shoes or Papa bought them when he went to town to buy furnishing for the year. One year, he bought a pair of girl high-top shoes and a pair of boy high-top shoes. They did not have two pairs alike. Who got the boy shoes? Merle got the boy shoes since her foot was longer and wider than Mary's feet.

Important Men in Our Lives

Notice we said men, not boys, for these were Old-Time peddlers who came to the country to sell their services and/or wares. They were what we called "rolling stores" or "drummers." These callers brought ice, food, hardware, and other goods. Often times they brought news from the older folks about the next county over. Many times they brought the necessities of life—but they also brought friendship, and important commodity in the good old days.



Some came in wagons similar to the picture here. We wondered how they packed so much on their means of transportation. Raleigh and Watkins men traveled their regular routes selling their finest spices and flavoring extracts. Among them were scissors grinders, harness makers, carpenters, insurance salesmen, and country doctors who made house calls. Included in their bags were home remedies such as black draught, castor oil, horse liniment and salve for the cows' udders. They also carried snuff and tobacco products, and gave out samples.

One hot summer day Mama sent us to the garden to pick butterbeans. About that time, a peddler came along and threw out two boxes of Tube Rose snuff. We grabbed the snuff and off to the garden we went. Having seen Mrs. Powell, a neighbor, open her snuff box and pour the snuff in her lower lip, we decided to try the same thing. The snuff not only went in our lips, but it went down our throats. Our grown-up actions were short lived for we began to get sick, sick. We lay down between the rows of bean vines, but soon realized we better head for the Out House out of the hot sun.

Mamma called, but no answer for we had left the garden. She began searching for us. When she saw us she did not scold, rather she started laughing for we were white as sheets and sick as dogs. Mamma dipped a little snuff with a brush made from a Blackgum bush in the yard. For years, she would get out her snuff box, which she carried in her apron pocket, and ask us if we would like to have some of her snuff. Not only did we not want it then, but we have never had a desire for any tobacco products as a result of this episode.

The iceman came only during the summer around the 4th of July. That is the time we bought ice to make ice cream. The insurance men came often always trying to sell some kind of policy.

With no means of transportation, the traveling grocery store was a Godsend to us. They would sell us groceries and take chickens and eggs for pay. The man would weigh the chickens and put them in the chicken crates that he carried on the back of the truck. We



looked forward to the weekly visit to buy penny candy, and what a penny would buy in those days! An all-day sucker, a peppermint stick, a miniature Baby Ruth or Butterfinger bar. Prices were very low back in those days. A loaf of bread was 8 cents, or two for 15 cents. Coffee was 15 cents a pound and sugar was 5 cents a pound. Times were hard, but everybody was in the same boat and people would be ready to help each other and not expect to be paid.

To us without transportation, and miles from a store, if we broke or lost the last needle in the house, we could not run out to the mall to buy another. We could only borrow one from a neighbor who lived down the dirt road. The arrival of the peddler was an important event. He not only brought the things we so desperately needed, but he knew whose daughter was getting married, who had a new baby, and who was sick. Subscribing to a newspaper was out of the question during the depression so the weekly peddler was our main news media.

The number of peddlers increased rapidly and their wares became more diversified. Money was always scarce in the country, and in return for the peddler’s goods or his skills, he often had to take eggs, chickens, garden produce, a bag of potatoes or whatever else our family had in abundance.

We still have peddlers of sorts, the Avon lady, the Fuller Brush man, the Stanley dealer, Home Interiors, and others who make their careers peddling goods.

As we look back, we owe the peddlers a few kind thoughts and a vote of thanks. Life in the country in the 20s and even early 30s would have been almost impossible without those early tradesmen who brought many of the simple necessities of life, and took away with them some of the surplus products of our families. They hastened progress of better roads and transportation, and were an important link in the chain of communication.

Today as we shop, we look for Watkins products among the extracts. A product we shall never forget is Watkins and Raleigh liniment that our poor crippled Mama used religiously. The odor throughout the house was evident that some within its confines was having body pain.

Depression Days: The Economy & Entertainment

Money was scarce, people squeezed everything out of a penny, but at least there was something to squeeze. Today people look at a penny with contempt—drop one and see if anyone will pick it up. Years ago you could actually spend a penny. There were penny post cards, penny arcades, and penny bubble gum machines. Whether we were pinching them, saving them, or exchanging them, we surely understood the value of the little copper coin.

The buffalo nickel was so popular when we were growing up because much could be bought with it. You could get two first-class stamps plus a penny postal card for a nickel. Today the buffalo is considered chicken feed for it would not pay the sales tax on any of the foods mentioned.

We enjoyed wholesome activities that did not cost money. We never dared say that we had nothing to do or someone—a parent, relative, or neighbor—would find something unpleasant that needed to be done. Therefore, we always found our own entertainment. Marbles, hopscotch, red rover, hide-and-seek, crack-the-whip, and jacks were popular when the weather permitted. In cold or wet weather pickup sticks, card games, dominos, and listening to the radio kept us occupied. Parties held the promise of pin the tail on the donkey, scavenger hunts, marshmallow roasts, peanut boilings, and always somebody’s popcorn balls, pulled molasses candy, and peanut brittle.

We might have been two young to remember our feelings as teenagers, but that period of history colored many of our adult years with idiosyncrasies that are still with us today: money, for example, as to how we spend it or how we don’t spend it.

Many fond memories centered around our fireplace. How we loved to sit around it at night and roast peanuts and/or sweet potatoes in the ashes. The fireplace was in this area that we studied, laughed, talked, and played games. We can still feel the heat of the back of our legs as we stood before the blazing fire while our front was freezing. Another favorite place—the kitchen—even now we can hear the humming of the old black teakettle on the stove.

The Pea Planting Episode

One warm spring day when we were 9 years old, we learned a valuable lesson about the laws of sowing and reaping. Papa said, “The Farmer’s Almanac says it is a good day for planting crops, and we will plant peas in the fairground field today.” To whom was he addressing those remarks? To both of us. Although we detested the job, we had no alternative but to drop seeds in between stalks of corn to have a fall crop of peas. It was backbreaking work and we got tired just thinking about it. Besides, we wanted to go fishing in the nearby creek.

Our reply to “Why can’t we buy a pea planter?” was “There was no pea planter.” Papa handed each of a us a bucket full of peas while saying, “You can pour out into a small pail what you need for several rows, but don’t waste any. Drop the peas in the rows, then cover them up. I’m going to be working in another field. I’m trusting you will do a good job.”

“But that might take all day,” we grumbled as Papa walked away. The sun grew hot as we slowly planted the peas. We became tired and thirsty. The water in the jug we brought with us was warm. Besides, the Farmer’s Almanac also said it was a good day for fishing.

The big bucket of peas was still half-full when we had a brilliant idea. We went to the end of the rows to the fence row where there were weeds and grass. We dug a huge hole and poured the remaining peas in the hole, covered it up and hurried home.

Papa was surprised that we had completed the job so soon. He asked if we had planted all the peas. We assured him that we had. We figured we were not really lying. We had planted the peas, but not in the place designated.

Papa said we could go fishing now that we had completed the job he had assigned us. Go fishing, we did and forgot all about our deceit. A few weeks later, Papa said in a very stern voice, “Girls, come with me.” When he used that tone of voice, we knew we were in trouble. He took us to the cornfield and pointed to a huge green mount in the fence row. Hundreds of pea shoots were popping out of the ground, but half of the rows in the cornfield were empty. “Remember, girls, your mistakes will usually be found out, but not as dramatically as this. Now tell me what happened here,” he demanded. Together, we tearfully confessed how we had gotten tired of planting peas, dug a hole and dumped it. “We thought no one would ever find out,” we said.

“Don’t ever try to cover up wrongdoing,” Papa sternly told us. “In this case, we could have replanted the peas if you had quickly admitted your deceit.” Papa also reminded us that nothing is ever hidden from God; he quoted the Bible verses “Be sure your sins will find you out,” and “You’ll reap what you sow.”

Papa then made us really feel bad when he said, “I thought I could depend on you. Because of your dishonesty, we may not have enough peas to last us until next year’s

crop.” That is exactly what happened. We ran out of peas and we could not have corn-bread and peas for supper for many weeks.

The next spring when corn-planting time came, we proudly accepted the chore of planting the peas as we were told to do. That lesson will live with us forever. In nature, as in life, we reap what we sow.



Our Conversion Experience

At age 14, during a summer revival at Ludlow Baptist Church, we both invited Jesus into our hearts. Brother Benton, a visiting minister, brought the message and the choir and congregation sang, “Wherever He Leads I’ll Go.” God spoke, and we answered His call. Although we had not discussed it, when the invitation came, both of us moved quickly to the front of the church and made a public decision for Christ. Reverend Mack Hughes served as our pastor for many years.

When asked about our conversion experience, it always brings joy and a bit of amusement. Why? Because of an instance that happened when we were baptized in the American Legion Pond at Ludlow. Fourteen candidates including us with many of our teen-age friends and one large lady from a neighboring community.

Reverend Mack Hughes led the way into the pond. He assured us he had scared the snakes away. The last, but certainly not the smallest of the candidates, was this large lady wearing a white blouse and white full skirt. As she entered the water, she had trouble keeping her skirt from floating. When she came out of the water, her white skirt stuck to her body. It was plain to read “self-rising” on her panties, which had been made from flour sacks. It was hard to keep from laughing, but we knew that would never do. There were many smiles and rolling eyes.

The American Legion pond is gone, but the Ludlow Baptist Church, a new brick one, stands where many, many happy memories were made.

***To a Southern teen in '38
this full immersion had all
the ingredients of an
unforgettable event.***

Food and Fellowship

When we think of food we readily think not about a particular dish, but we think about those funny, sweet and tender moments of happy occasions from the long-gone past of those dear familiar faces and voices.

Don’t you remember some of those meal times, especially on Sundays when friends and relatives came to visit and have Sunday dinner with us. Our parents loved having company. We accused our Papa of spending all the grocery money on Sunday and we had little to eat the rest of the week. But we do not remember what we had, but it was the laughing, giggling, telling tales, sharing embarrassing moments, friend to friend, and sibling to sibling, to touch each other in fellowship and love.

At those tables, a child, and later, the child in us, could watch and listen and learn. The dinner table was and will remain a place of adventure and exploration, a place where the curious eye and ear can partake of the rich store of other people’s’ experiences. What better place to relax and entertain those you love.

As children, we had to wait for the grown folk to eat first, we can remember how impatient we would get when they kept talking, laughing, and eating when we were starving. We were also wondering if they were going to leave anything for us children. For years we only knew how a chicken wing, foot, or neck tasted—for that was about the only piece left for us to eat. It was at that time that we said, “when we have a home of our own, we will let everyone eat at once so we can all enjoy the food and fellowship.”

Once when Uncle Charlie, Papa’s younger brother, who was thirty plus years and single, was eating with us and Papa said, “Charlie, you better be sure about choosing which woman to marry (he was dating two at the same time). I can tell you one thing, hugging and kissing don’t last forever . . . but the cooking does.”

All-Day Singing and Dinner on-the-Ground

Country girls we were, and still are. We know all about those Baptist revivals and all day singing and dinner on the grounds. During those days, one or two preachers and song leaders would be coming to dinner with us the following week. The first day called for dinner on the ground, with food that was prepared by all ladies of the church and displayed like golden wedding presents for a princess.

We can still hear Jaunita Hardy advertising her delicious fried apple tarts, and Uncle Atley looking for the sweet potato pie. These even supplied enough chicken for us to have a choice in the piece we wanted. Confession is good for the soul—dinnertime (now called lunchtime) was our favorite time of the day since singing was not our forte. We can't say that the all day singings made us a better singer, for practice can only improve a talent—it can't create one. The singings provided pleasure and social interaction and instilled in us a lifelong love of gospel music.

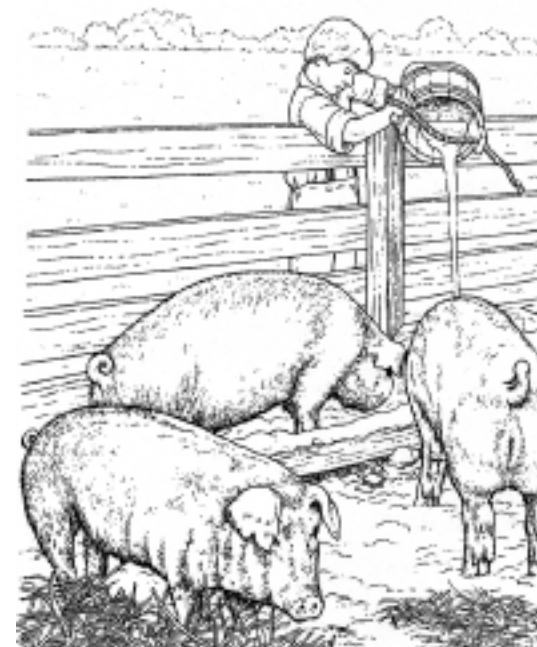
You can bet there were many good cooks and they were proud to be called the best cook in the country. Most of all, we remember when those devout deacons went on much too long when they asked the blessing, and when they mumbled “bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies” would have done just as well.

What did that mean to us then and now? It was about friendship, sharing, caring and love—to show our love for God and one another. There is a particular bond between friends who prepare food together and who dine with each other. To cook and invite family and friends to eat with us has always been our delight.

Depression Days of the 1930s

“Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without”—the family slogan during the Depression. We could not think of our family as rich in material goods, but we never thought of ourselves as poor. Growing up on a small tenant farm with industrious Papa and Mama was one of God's gracious gifts to our lives. Their bodies had no lazy bones. They did not plan to raise lazy children either. Papa would say, “Get up, it's almost daylight. You have a lot to do before going to school.”

For us it meant cooking breakfast, washing dishes, making up beds, sweeping floors, and getting dressed for school. Brothers, Eddie Clifton, and Gary milked cows and fed all the animals. After school chores were plowing, planting, mending fences, splitting wood, gathering eggs and vegetables, feeding hogs and horses, and assorted other seasonal or year-around tasks. In the fall of the year there were cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, and peanuts to be harvested. Our parents were wise and served the Lord with disciplined labor.



We were fortunate to live on farms where we grew much of our food. We had cows for milk, chickens for meat and eggs, and a garden for vegetables. Pigs provided our meat. When the weather turned cold, cold, the pigs were butchered and every part of the pigs was saved except, as our Mama would say, “Everything but the squeal.” The fat was rendered in the big black wash pot in the yard. We had gallons of lard to store for another year. Papa hung the hams and bacon in the smokehouse to cure and salted the shoulders down for the winter in the old meat box.

When all the meat was gone, Mama cooked the meat skins with butter beans or black-eyed peas. Sometimes she fried them in her old iron skillet and used the fat to make gravy. It tasted good over hot biscuits. We don't remember a recipe, but she put some kind of drippings in the old black skillet on the wood-burning stove.

When it was hot, she added a handful of flour, a bit of salt and pepper, and poured in the liquid—part milk and part water. When there was no milk, water was used, but that was the last resort. We believe “gravy,” called many names, saved more lives during the Depression than penicillin saves today.

Papa was not an avid hunter, but our older brothers, Eddie and Clifton, enjoyed hunting squirrels, rabbits, and birds. These meats added much flavor to gravy, stew, or dumplings. If meat was limited, Mama boiled the meat, and added onions, potatoes, salt

and pepper. We ate it with corn bread made from homegrown corn. The corn was pulled in the field, taken to the grist mill, and ground. A portion of the meal was taken by the grinder, to pay for grinding our meal. As for desserts, three layers of a plain cake was made and stacked together with jelly of whatever kind we had. Most often it would be blackberry or plumb.

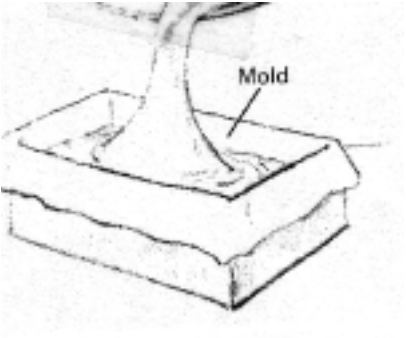
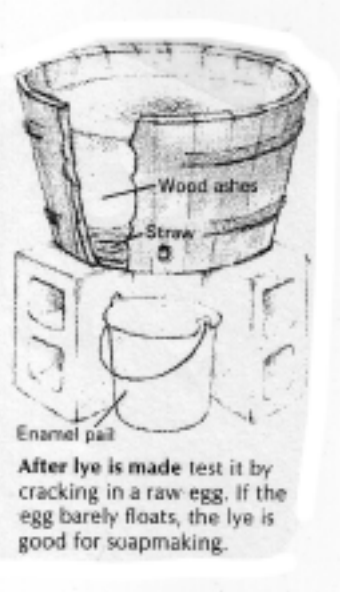
Sometimes we had a cake or cookies made from molasses. Papa cooked syrup for others and kept a portion to pay for cooking their syrup. We were never really hungry, although food was scarce at times. We grew up being thankful for the values we learned during the Depression: specifically, how to save, to share, and to have compassion for others. We learned to work hard, survive, and to cope with life.

Soap Making During the Depression

One of Mama’s favorite activities was making her own soap for general cleaning. She kept a certain can setting on the back of the stove and in it she saved every drop of grease. When the fireplace ashes needed cleaning out, they were deposited in an old “ash barrel” in the yard to save for making the lye soap.

When that grease can was full, she took some ashes from the barrel to begin the soap-making process. She put a can of Red Devil Lye in the bottom of the big black pot we used outdoors for boiling clothes. Then she mixed the drippings of the ashes and the grease. When she added some water, the stuff boiled. She mixed and stirred the soap with an oar-shaped paddle. It had a long handle so that she or us did not have to get near the fumes as it cooked.

The more it cooked, the thicker it got. When it was like thick pudding, Papa put out the fire. We helped dip up the hot soap with a heavy metal dipper and poured it into a wooden box he had made as a mold. Before it became too hard, he cut it into squares (bars of soap). That soap was used only for cleaning things around the farm—not us for we had P & G Soap from the country store.



Papa’s mold for soap.



The finished product in all kind of shapes.

A Laundry ‘Receet’ in 1870

(Same as we experienced in our growing up)

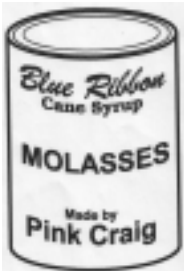
1. Build fire in back yard to heat kettle of rainwater.
2. Set tubs so smoke won't blow in eyes if wind is pert.
3. Shave one whole cake of lye soap in biling water.
4. Sort things. Make three piles: one pile whites, one pile colored, one pile work britches and rags.
5. Stir flour in cold water to smooth, then thin down with biling water to make starch.
6. Rub dirty spots on board, scrub hard, then bile; rub colored but don't bile; just wrench and starch.
7. Spread tea towels on grass.
8. Hang old rags on fence.
9. Pour wrench water on flower beds.
10. Scrub porch with hot, soapy water.
11. Turn tubs upside down.
12. Go put on clean dress, smooth hair with side combs, brew a cup of tea, set and rest and rock a spell, and count your blessings.



Making Sugar Cane Syrup (Molasses)

Back in Scott County, Mississippi, throughout our growing up years, we enjoyed being a part of making good sugar cane syrup. When the leaves of autumn began to turn their beautiful colors, Papa would begin to harvest his ribbon cane. Ribbon cane was a type of sugar cane used to make molasses of the highest quality. Eddie, Clifton, Gary, Merle, and Mary helped Papa load the stalks of cane on a wagon to be hauled to the syrup mill. Papa made his own syrup. He also would grind others' cane and make it into syrup. He was usually paid for this service, usually in buckets of molasses.

The syrup mill consisted of metal rollers and gears mounted high on a platform. A pole made from a small tree was connected to the gearbox and extended several feet out from the mill. The end of the pole was connected to a mule that provided the power to turn the rollers.



The mule walked in a big circle around the mill all day long as many of us fed stalks of cane between the rollers. As the cane was crushed, the juice collected in a container and ran downhill toward the cooking vat through a system of pipes and barrels. The barrels were covered with clean cheesecloth to filter out any trash from the grinding. By the time the juice reached the cooking vat, it had been filtered at least twice.

Before the cane juice went into the vat, we could catch some of the sweet liquid in a cup and drink it. We soon learned not to drink too much because it was also a powerful laxative, and its effects lasted for days.

The juice flowed into the cooking vat, a large, flat, metal container. It was held up off the ground by 4-foot brick walls on three sides. A fire was built in the open space under the vat to cook the syrup. It was usually fueled with rich pine kindling, and it was hot. The vat held many gallons of cane juice to be cooked down into syrup, a process that took many hours of precise cooking. The cooking was done by Papa, who knew exactly how many gallons of juice it would take to make so many gallons of syrup.

As the juice cooked into syrup, brown foam formed on top of the cooking cane juice. Papa used a long, flat shovel to skim this foam off and deposit it in another barrel next to the vat. These skimmings were sometimes fed to the hogs as a nutritious treat. But if too much time elapsed between the skimming and the feeding, the skimmings would begin to ferment and make the hogs drunk. A drunken hog was a sight to behold!

When Papa knew the syrup was ready, he let the fire die down and stopped the cooking. A faucet was opened at one end of the vat, and the syrup poured out into clean syrup cans. Visiting the cane mill and watching the syrup being made was a long, hard day but an exciting experience for us. Most of all, drinking that cane juice was the highlight of the day. The fun followed with many days of hot biscuits, butter, and molasses syrup. What a sweet reward for a day's adventure at the cane mill!

Mama’s Molasses Recipes

Molasses Pie

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup molasses
1/3 cup butter
3 eggs
pinch of salt and soda
1 teaspoon vanilla

Heat stove to 400 degrees. Melt butter; add sugar; add eggs, and beat a little. Put in molasses and stir. Add a pinch of salt and a pinch of soda. Add Vanilla. Pour in pie crust. Bake at 400 for two minutes, then reduce to 300 and cook 55 minutes.

Popped Corn Balls

3 quarts popped corn
1 cup molasses
1/2 cup sugar
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 teaspoon salt

Put corn in large pan and sprinkle with salt. Melt butter and add molasses and sugar. Boil until mixture becomes brittle when tried in cold water (270 degrees F). Pour mixture gradually, while stirring constantly, over corn. Shape into balls. Wrap in wax paper.

Molasses Cookies

1/2 cup shortening (lard and butter)
1/3 cup brown sugar
1 egg
1/2 cup molasses
1/4 cup coffee, milk, or water
2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ginger or cloves
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon soda

Cream shortening and sugar. Add egg, molasses and coffee, milk, or water. Mix and sift remaining ingredients and add. Beat well. Add more flour if needed. Drop from spoon on buttered cookie sheet and bake about 10 minutes in moderately hot oven (375). Makes 48 cookies.

Molasses Nut Brittle

1 1/2 cups shelled, raw peanuts
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup molasses
1/2 cup water
1 1/2 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon vanilla or lemon extract

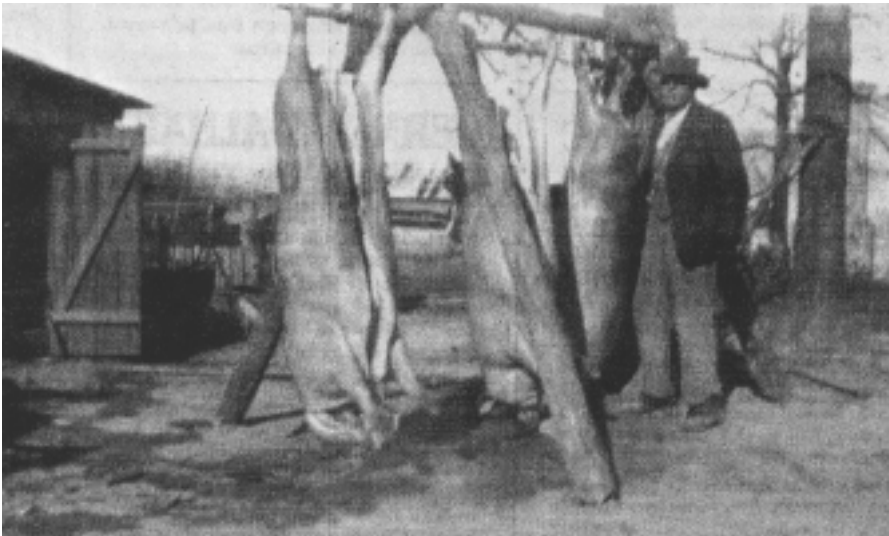
Sprinkle nuts with salt and warm in oven. Put sugar, molasses, and water in pan, stir until it begins to boil, cook until mixture is very brittle when tried in cold water. Add butter, flavoring, and nuts, pour into shallow, buttered pan. As soon as it can be handled, turn the mass over and pull and stretch it out as thin as possible. Break in irregular pieces.

Remember, our stove had no thermostat. Heat depended on the kind and amount of wood used.

Butchering Days in the 1940s

How the word spread we do not know, since we had no telephones, but when butchering day came, the neighbors were there to help. Perhaps it was the billowing smoke from the fire around the huge, black cast-iron pot in the back yard that gave them a signal. Papa listened intently to the weather forecast on our battery radio so that he could pick the best day. Mississippi winters were not too severe and it was important to choose the coldest day possible for butchering.

The men helped outside with the slaughtering process where the fleshly slaughtered meat was scalded in boiling water to loosen the hair so it could be scraped off more easily. The following picture shows Papa beside one of the hogs butchered in 1940.



Everyone seemed to enjoy the fellowship more than they disliked the work. It gave them an opportunity to share stories and sample all the good food brought in or cooked on our wood-burning kitchen stove.

Real Country Living

We may not have known we were poor, but we knew it was hot! Summer temperatures ranged from 90 to 100 degrees without electric fans or air conditioners. Those cardboard fans at church with advertising written on them really saved our lives. How we survived those hot days in the field with big hats or bonnets, long shirt-sleeves, and overalls is more than we can comprehend now. Of course, we were always conscious of getting freckles when exposed to the sun, so we really covered up. Mama told us our freckles would leave when we got grown. We are now turning 87 years old and we still have freckles. We are like “hot house chickens” for we just burn up when we are not in air conditioning if the temperature gets above 80 degrees. It could be that some of the fat we have accumulated is a factor in body heat. When we finished high school we were weighing around 100 pounds and now our weight has climbed to about 145 pounds.

We had no electricity, therefore, no refrigerator—not even an icebox. The iceman came around on the fourth of July and that was the only time we had ice. Papa bought ice to make ice cream for the 4th of July and you can believe it was a real celebration. Our milk could not be kept long without becoming sour in the heat unless we put it in a molasses bucket and tied a rope to the handle and let it down in the cistern. It stayed cool and was ready for our usually “milk and bread” supper.

Water was scarce many times when the cistern got very low. In some places we lived, there was a dug well and we had cool drinking water for the animals and us. There were no swimming pools, but there were nearby creeks. Our brothers and neighborhood boys went to the creeks, but Mama never let us have that exciting experience.

Winters were cold, cold in those poorly constructed houses with cracks in the walls and floors. The wind came through howling and nipping any part of our body that was not covered. Our open fireplace kept at least one room warm. The heat kept us turning to keep from burning one side while the other was freezing. At night, the beds were piled with warm handmade quilts. It was hard to turn over sometime, but it was a warm place to sleep.

Helpful Hints and Healthy Living

When we were sick, Mama relied mostly on home remedies. The doctor was called only after Mama’s resources has been exhausted. In spite of various precautions, we kids fell heir to contagious diseases such as measles and chicken pox. Mama knew that chances excellent that we would all take the disease from the first victim, and she felt the sooner the whole matter was over with the better for all concerned. How did she handle that situation? She made us sleep together, eat together, even drink from the same glass, leaving nothing to chance. No isolation was permitted.

Mama was a firm believer in preventative medicine. Every spring, each of us was dosed with generous helping of sulfur and molasses. Our current state of health had nothing to do with the matter. This was merely to get that sluggish inter blood on the run and off to a good start. (We wonder now if that is why we are both allergic to sulfur.) Today, we can bow to the superiority of modern medicine. Many dread diseases have been wiped out, and science works all the time for our cures, and for that we are thankful.

1938 Ninth Grade Class



First row: Dorothy Bennett, Jean Price, Mae Craig, Corrine Burnside, teacher, Miss Hamilton
Second row: Mary Craig, Merle Craig, Fannie Lee Cockrell, Gladys Bennett
Third row: Junior Anderson, Horace Renfroe, Ott Waggoner, Hubert Latham, Clifton Craig

As of 2008 only 3 or 4 are living. They are Corrine Burnside (Porter), Mary Craig (Denson), Merle Craig (Latham), Junior Anderson (unknown)

Junior and Senior High School Years

One of the highlights of our junior and senior high school years was the Valentine party with combined classes. Since proms did not take place in small community schools, the Valentine party hit the top chart for entertainment of the year. Mary dated L. J. Johnson and Merle dated John D. Latham.

On April 7, 1941, the day before graduation we had a junior/senior picnic at Roosevelt State Park in Morton. Ball games were played, lovers walked around holding hands, and a delicious lunch was enjoyed by all. Most of us got sunburned and had red faces and arms for graduation the next day. Roy Noble Lee was our graduation speaker. The main thing we remember was his quoting the poem, “Crossing the Bar,” one of our favorite of all poems.

Ruth Hughes was chosen as valedictorian and Jean Price was the salutatorian. Frankly, they were substitutes for Mary and Merle. The principal, Mr. C. B. Neal, refused to let Mary serve as valedictorian because he was punishing her for leaving a basketball tournament in progress at Forest, MS. During a game at half time, Mary and Louise Crawford pulled off their ball suits and slipped out the gym door and met Vernon Weaver and Preston Johnson. Why did they do that?

Because Louise and Vernon were getting married that evening and Mary and Preston were to be their witnesses. Everything had been planned for the wedding to take place at Lena, about 50 miles away. They told no one: Merle knew but would not tell. As punishment, Mary was not given valedictorian, and Merle had 2/7 of one point less than Mary, but she refused the salutatorian because they took the honor from Mary. Louise did not get punished because she never returned to school. She married February 22 and school was out April 8. She later graduated from Lena High School.

Aunt Belle Austin and Cousin Annie Fromberg sent us our graduation dresses and hats. You bet we felt dressed up and kept the dresses for years. We hated to cover those pretty pink dresses with a graduation gown.

Senior Year

We looked forward to high school except English grammar. In junior high our teachers were young and fresh out of college and taught us literature rather than grammar. In the 11th grade Miss Trudie May Duncan said, “You’re going to learn how to write and talk correct grammar if it kills me.” She meant every word of it. Did we ever have the homework learning parts of speech, how to conjugate verbs, and how to write correct sentences. For that teacher, we shall ever be grateful.

The following poem helped in learning and using the parts of speech:

A noun is the name of anything; Book or pencil, hoop, or ring.	How things are done the adverbs tell; Slowly, quickly, poorly, or well.
Instead of nouns, the pronouns stand; Their heads, her face, his hand.	Prepositions link the noun: We stayed home; they went to town.
Verbs tell the tale the nouns begins; He runs, sings, dances, and wins.	Conjunctions join the words together; Men and women; wind or weather.
Adjectives tell what kind of noun; Great, small, pretty, red, and brown.	Interjections show surprise; Oh! How petty, Ah! How wise.



With so few students, we attend all classes together; however, teachers would always separate us. Teachers knew us only by our assigned seats. We delighted in exchanging seats sometime to see if the teacher knew the difference. As far as we know, they never caught on to our trick.

Many times we were accused of having sign language because our answers would be identical even though we were three or four rows apart. Our answer to that accusation was: “Since we have only one set of books and we study together, maybe that is why our answers are the same.” Our IQ’s are the same. In fact, there was only two-seventh of one point difference in our high school scholastic average when we graduated from Ludlow High School, Class of 1941.

Basketball

Junior and senior high school became more exciting each year! We tried a few **dirty** tricks on the teachers and coaches. For an example: Often times when playing basketball as forwards, during the half time, we would exchange blouses. Why? So the opposing coach would put his best guard on the one who was doing most of the scoring. We were identified only by our numbers, and our teammates never let the cat out of the bag.

Mr. Prentice Tullos, another first-year teacher, came to Ludlow as science teacher and boys’ basketball coach. He was a small man with a body straight as a stick and neat as a pin. He dressed to perfection with a modern hat on his head. Boys liked him and girls adored him. His main interest was basketball, not science. How could he teach biology or chemistry without a microscope or laboratory equipment?

His alternative method of teaching included lecture and fill-in-the-blank workbooks. Some of the students wrote in the blanks as “John ran the rabbit under the bush.” They never left a blank space, but seldom filled in the right word. As to whether they got away with it, we are not certain, but we know they did not graduate. Mr. Tullos died in Service by a land mine in France in 1945.



Ludlow Basketball Team

1938 - 1939



First Row (Left): Bonnie Opal Bennett, Mary Craig, Gladys Bennett, Lodean Williams,
Second Row: Irma Jean Waggoner, Grace Nutt, Lataine Allison, manager, Frances Ray, Odessa Adcock, and Miss Meek, coach

The Ludlow Depot

In this day of air and highway traffic, the railroad depots are almost a thing of the past. For years, our depot was deserted sitting in a dilapidated state surrounded by weeds and logs. A few years later, the railroad tracks and depot disappeared.

When we were in our teenage years, the depot, or “the station,” as it was called in Ludlow, was an important hub of local commerce. There the farmers with their “rigs” waited for freight from the city, and the merchants waited with their trucks to pick up stock for their stores. Also, the logging business, including pulpwood, was in full swing just waiting to be loaded on freight cars for export. The community’s unemployed sat at train time, for want of something better to do.

However, the passenger train, “The Rebel” represented a different story; it brought and picked up mailbags to and from the Ludlow Post Office. Those few cars for passengers inspired fantasies. As we watched the conductor help the passengers dismount, we dreamed of the time when we would embark on such a journey! Some of the more affluent patrons would take the train to Jackson for a shopping spree and return home in the late afternoon, tired but happy.

After 70 years, we still have a wonderful, but sad feeling of the many memories as we cross where the railroad tracks and the depot used to be.

How Holidays Were Celebrated

Easter: Chicken and guinea eggs were boiled and colored in preparation for our Easter egg hunt. What fun to color those eggs with crayons, materials that would fade and food coloring. Most nieces and nephews joined us for finding the hidden eggs in the yard, lawn, or pasture. Included each year were “prize eggs” used as rewards.

July 4: The iceman came around the 4th of July and that was the only time we had ice. Papa bought ice to make ice cream in the hand-cranked freezer for the 4th, and you can believe that it was a real celebration. The milk used was kept in a molasses bucket and tied with a rope to the handle to let it down in the cistern. It stayed cool and was ready for ice cream or our usual “milk and bread” supper. We strived to be through cultivating the crops by the 4th. We also planted early gardens to have fresh vegetables on this holiday.

Thanksgiving: Thanksgiving Day was always celebrated with a big lunch (dinner) with as many of the family members possible there. Turkey was absent on our menu, but a big fat hen with cornbread dressing was the main dish. We had good ole’ smokehouse ham, sweet potatoes, vegetables, and some kind of cake or pie. No particular Thanksgiving stands out in our minds, but we rejoiced to have our older brothers and sisters home for the day.

Christmas: We always hung our stockings from the mantel, cut our tree from the nearby woods, and decorated it with popcorn, paper chains, ornaments of sweet-gum ball covered in silver gum wrappers. All the families we knew were struggling financially and we were told not to expect expensive gifts. When we got an apple, orange, mixed nuts, and some candy, we were happy. Perhaps there would be two or three sparklers and maybe some jacks or marbles in our stockings.

Our Siblings

Our parents’ first child, Walter P. Craig, was born March 15, 1901, in Scott County, Mississippi. Walter was grown and gone to Shawnee, Oklahoma, to work before we were old enough to remember him. He worked five years before returning home with a beautiful wife, Maggie, and two pretty little girls: Ida Frances and Slonia Mae. This visit we do remember!



We were five and Gary was two years old. We had been told about our big brother and everyone was excited about his coming home. The February temperature had kept us inside looking out the window looking for his family to arrive. It became dark so Papa put an extra log on the fire to warm the room for their arrival. We three acted as though Santa Claus was coming and we decided to stay up, or at least sleep on the beds in the fireplace room with Mama and Papa. That we did!

Excitement! You bet! Most of all, Walter had not been told he had a little brother named Gary. Therefore, Walter was surprised when Mama introduced him to a little brother that he had never heard about. When she introduced Gary to Walter as his big brother, Gary said, “No, he’s not my brother, he’s my Grandpa.” We think he thought this because both Walter and Grandpa smoked a pipe.

How we envied Ida’s long braided hair which fell to her shoulders when her mother combed it. We wished for hair like hers instead of thin, fine, black hair that was always cut Buster Brown. We also admired Slonia Mae’s big blue eyes.

The story Walter told us as to how they met went like this: “I went to Oklahoma to visit Aunt Johnnie and Uncle Jodie Davis. I liked Shawnee and decided to stay and work at the hatchery for them. Aunt Johnnie invited Maggie’s mother to come over and pick some peas. Her mother came and brought one of her daughters with her. Since both Maggie and I had the same last name, we became acquainted rather quickly. So, you could say, we met in the pea patch.”



Walter and Maggie married November 10, 1923, in Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma. After many years of research, they never found a family connection although they both were named “Craig.” They lived on a farm outside Shawnee and reared seven children—three boys and four girls—Ida Frances, Slonia Mae, George Milton, Buford, Mary Jane, Chester, and Irma. To date, 2006, Slonia Mae is the lone survivor, and lives in Oklahoma City.

They left the farm in 1961 and moved to 23 East Drummond in Shawnee. Walter worked as a night foreman at the Davis Hatchery, and Maggie worked for Oklahoma Baptist University. Walter died August 1, 1968 and Maggie died May 9, 1991 and they were buried at Blackmon Cemetery, Shawnee, Ok.

Walter Craig

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Nannie Craig Price

Walter, welcomed his little sister, Nannie, at the age of two. Papa and Mama were teenage parents. When we were born, they were in their 40s. Nannie, a grown young lady, helped them with us. Mama breast fed Mary and Nannie fed Merle with a bottle. She told us many times she had to go out in the cold to find a cow to milk for Merle. All of this we do not remember since we were only two years old when Nannie married. However, we have many happy memories of our oldest sister.

Mama told us Nannie was a good student and her dream was to become a teacher. After high school, she kept house for Uncle Atley Kitchings at Tinnin in exchange for courses so she could earn her teaching certificate. After completing the courses, and with her certificate, she applied for a teaching position in Scott County. She was very disappointed when the position was given to one of the Trustee’s family member.

Nannie married Thomas Price, son of Will and Nancy Katherine Price. Thomas was employed in Mendenhall; therefore, they moved to Simpson County. Thomas built a home on the outskirts of town, but later moved into town where he became employed. Thomas was a good provider, a loyal husband, and devoted Daddy. Nannie kept the home fires burning while employing her sweet disposition in nurturing and teaching their children.



They had five children: Irene, Katherine, Thomas, Jr., Bess, and William Sanders (Billy). Nannie realized her dream of teaching when each of her children was promoted one grade as a result of her home schooling. We remember Nannie as a married sister with children almost our age. Since Mendenhall was 50 miles away, poor roads, and the cost of travel during The Depression, we saw her family only twice a year. What fun when we visited them with singing around the piano, and going to the city dump looking for trash and treasures, and dipping fresh cool water from their flowing springs.

One time we were on the way to Mendenhall when Eddie’s Model T would not pull the “May Hill.” Eddie said, “Don’t worry, I know what to do.” He let the car roll back to level ground, turned the car around, and up the hill we went in reverse.

At this writing, Thomas, Nannie, Irene, and Katherine and Thomas, Jr. are with the Lord. Bess lives in Rankin County, and Billy lives in Simpson County. Each of them has a beautiful home and family with Christian children and grandchildren.

We remember one time we were on our way to Mendenhall when Eddie’s Model T would not pull the “May Hill.” Eddie said, “That’s all right, I know what to do.” He let the car roll back to level ground, turned the car around, and up the hill we went in reverse.

Eddie & Mary's 50th Wedding

A beautiful occasion, but so sad because Eddie was taken to the Van Winkle Baptist Church from Hinds General Hospital. He was very ill with cancer and lived only two months after the celebration.

How blessed we were to have our family together for this event. Within two years, Leola and Clifton died. Gary died in 2005. Merle and I only have each other now (2008).

Our four brothers were fine Christian men that we were proud to claim as our family.



Ruby Merchant

Since Ruby married one week after we were born, we do not remember her living at home with us. We do have fond memories of visiting in her home with a house full of children. She used to laugh and say she was going to have a dozen children with each one having a birthday in a different month. Believe it or not, she had eleven and only two of them were born in the same month.

Ruby was a bundle of energy and a master home economist. She knew how to handle children and how to assign responsibilities. In her retirement years, she quilted dozens of quilts—one for each child, and perhaps for each grandchild, as long as she lived.

James died in October and Wilbur died in November of 2006. James was buried at Branch and Wilbur at Leesburg. As of today, only one grandchild, Dan Smith died April 12, 1977. Grady died July 8, 1988. Ruby died January 8, 1988 and she and Grady was buried Branch cemetery. For more information, refer to the book, 100 Year Span of the Kitchings Clan.



Ruby and Grady's 50th Wedding Celebration

Seated: Grady and Ruby
From left to right: Rosie Lane, Joseph, Opal, Wilbur, Vivian, James, Grady Carl, Carolyn, Willie, Lovelle, and Mark

Tressie Mae Craig

Our beautiful sister, Tressie Mae, was a Christian single lady who had many, many friends. What a thrill when she came home from Deama, Mississippi, where she worked. She always brought us presents and clothes because she dearly loved us. We remember her sitting at the dressing table on a stool and having us pull gray hairs from her head. She, like us, grayed early.



She was 24 years old in 1930 when she had a severe asthma attack while returning to school in Shawnee, Oklahoma with friends and classmates. They were: Jerome McCraw, Otis Baker, Bennie Crye, Nellie Baker, and brother Eddie Craig. We were 8 years old and what a devastating blow to our family and community.

This is the kind of car Tressie Mae was traveling in when she had the asthma attack due to dust from the dusty roads. She died in Mineola, TX.

